

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 NEA-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 OMB-01 AID-20 COME-00

EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OPR-02 SY-10 USSS-00 DRC-01 OC-06

CCO-00 /191 W

----- 036624

R 211530Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4247

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, TS

SUBJ: MASMOUDI SO FAR AVOIDS CONFRONTATION -

SITUATION CALM BUT SOME UNDERLYING TENSION EVIDENT

REF: TUNIS 322.

1. DESPITE INDICATIONS REPORTED REFTEL THAT EX-FONMIN MASMOUDI INTENDED CONDUCT ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS, HE APPARENTLY HAD SECOND THOUGHTS AND HAS GRANTED ONLY ONE TO OUR KNOWLEDGE SINCE JAN 17 PSD POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING. HE RECEIVED AFP CORRESPONDENT TO WHOM HE REPORTEDLY GAVE NO NEW INFO BUT REPEATED STATEMENTS HE GAVE TO PAUL BALTA OF LE MONDE (JAN 19 ISSUE, WHICH ON SALE HERE). PM NOUIRA GAVE INTERVIEWS TO WEST GERMAN TV, NY TIMES GINIGER, LE MONDE AND PERHAPS OTHERS. SO FAR THESE DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE ADDED NEW INFO ON MERGER PLANS OR MASMOUDI
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CONTROVERSY. NOUIRA REPORTEDLY MADE NO MENTION OF LATTER

TO BALTA.

2. MEANWHILE BOURGUIBA LEFT FOR GENEVA MORNING JAN 19 FOR MEDICAL CHECKUP AND "THREE WEEKS REST AT GSTAAD". PRESS QUOTED HIM AS SAYING ONLY THAT "WE ARE GOING TO PROCEED WITH MODIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION WITH A VIEW TO INTRODUCING THE REFERENDUM INTO IT". MASMOUDI WAS SEEN BY EMBOFF AT AIRPORT AT TIME OF BOURGUIBA'S DEPARTURE. HOWEVER, IT BELIEVED HE ARRIVED TOO LATE TO SEE BOURGUIBA OFF.

3. SECURITY FORCES HEAVILY DISPLAYED DOWNTOWN TUNIS JAN 20 IN ANTICIPATION POSSIBLE DISTURBANCE FOLLOWING TRADE UNION (UGTT) RALLY IN MORNING OR FOOTBALL GAMES IN AFTERNOON. JEWISH SYNAGOGUE HEAVILY GUARDED. HOWEVER, BY 2100 ALMOST ALL SPECIAL POLICE (BUREAU D'ORDRE PUBLIQUE) HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN. NO INCIDENTS REPORTED.

4. COMMENT: NOUIRA-MASMOUDI FEUD APPEARS TO BE QUIESCENT FOR THE MOMENT. ON SURFACE SITUATION IS CERTAINLY CALM, ALTHOUGH WE SENSE SOME UNDERLYING TENSION AS RESULT OF DISAPPOINTMENT IN SOME QUARTERS OVER MERGER DELAY AND SUSPICION IT WILL BE DROPPED ENTIRELY AT SOME FUTURE DATE. POLICE WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO WATCH SITUATION CLOSELY AT LEAST UNTIL LIBYAN INTENTIONS BECOME CLEARER.
SEELYE

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